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Question of Cyprus

Oceans and the law of the sea

Letter dated 5 August 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Cyprus to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Once again, I would like to convey my Government's grave concern about a statement made on 2 August 2016 by the spokesman of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This statement, taking the same line as the press release issued by the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 25 March 2016, is but a repetition of unacceptable and legally unfounded claims and positions and an expression of a continuing provocative and destabilizing attitude vis-à-vis the Republic of Cyprus.

In his statement, the spokesman of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, questioning sovereign rights of the Republic of Cyprus, asserted Ankara's groundless claims on parts of the Republic's exclusive economic zone and addressed warnings and threats against international oil and gas companies that took part in the third international tender for hydrocarbon exploration and exploitation in the Republic's exclusive economic zone.

I pointed out, in a letter addressed to you on 7 April 2016, that the Republic of Cyprus, exercising its sovereign rights in accordance with international law — including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea — called for a third international tender for hydrocarbon exploration and exploitation in its exclusive economic zone. The tender was published in the *Official Journal of the European Union* on 24 March 2016, and the deadline for the submission of offers expired on 22 July 2016. Major international oil and gas companies expressed their interest and submitted offers.

Turkey's deplorable position and claims, reflected again in the above-mentioned statements, based on an arbitrary interpretation of international treaties and conventions, are completely unfounded and devoid of any legal basis. In addition, such behaviour is a further proof of its continued refusal to comply with international law and relevant Security Council resolutions, especially resolutions 541 (1983) and 550 (1984).

Naturally, the Republic of Cyprus, a State Member of the United Nations, can legitimately exercise all its sovereign rights deriving from international law both

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over its land and sea territories, including the sovereign rights over its exclusive economic zone and its continental shelf, as guaranteed by the United Nation Convention on the Law of the Sea, which was ratified by the Republic of Cyprus in 1988.

It is also regrettable that Turkey uses as a pretext for its above stance the "protection of the rights of the Turkish Cypriots". The Government of the Republic of Cyprus has repeatedly made it clear that Cyprus's natural wealth belongs to the people of Cyprus. The rights of the Turkish Cypriots will be best served in the framework of a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem, which will allow all Cypriots to live in conditions of peace, dignity and prosperity. Within this framework, the exploitation of Cyprus's hydrocarbons will benefit all Cypriots and guarantee a prosperous future.

Turkey, therefore, instead of making threats and adopting positions that are contrary to international law and the resolutions of the United Nations, should be concentrating on adopting a truly constructive attitude towards a settlement of the Cyprus problem, a settlement that will allow the reunification of the country, its people, its economy and its institutions.

The Government of the Republic of Cyprus will continue to exercise, uphold and protect its sovereign rights to explore and exploit its natural resources within its exclusive economic zone, in accordance with international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, using all peaceful means at its disposal.

Turkey should fully understand the absolute necessity to refrain from provocative public statements, abide by international legality and its obligations under the Charter of the United Nations, respect the sovereignty and sovereign rights of all States Members of the United Nations and tangibly contribute to the efforts for a settlement of the Cyprus problem.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda items 44 and 79 (a).

(*Signed*) Nicholas **Emiliou**